(c) what are the main reasons for the decline in the area under rice cultivation; and

(d) what steps are being taken to increase the production of rice to meet the increasing demand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The area under rice during 1902-93 is currently estimated at 41.39 million hectares.

(c) The reasons for decline in area under rice cultivation was deficient rains at the time of sowing in some parts of the country.

(d) For increasing the production of rice, the Government is implementing an Integrated Programme for Rice Development (IPRD) in different States besides ensuring price and market support.

Phasing out of Tobacco Cultivators

3322. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHAR MA: Will the Minister of AGRICUL TORE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Govern ment have decided to phase out tobacco cultivation;

(b) if so, the number of farmers likely to be affected by the phase out;

(c) the loss of revenue likely to fall as a result thereof; and

(d) what alternate plan is being chalked to rehabilitate these affected farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM}: (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Tobacco Cultivators In A. P.

3323. SHRI MENTAY PADMANA-; BHAM. Will the Minister of AGRI-CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken not of the advice given by Prime Min ister to tobacco farmers in Andhra Pra desh to switch over to other crops;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to follow through on the suggestion;

(c) whether there is a proposal to en-courage tobacco farmers to switch over to non-traditional crops like sunflower and soyabean; and

(d) steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE ,SHRI ARVIND NETAM); (a) Yes, Sir. The Tobacco Board in the Min, istry of Commerce, which is regulating the production and marketing of Virgi nia tobacco which is mainly grown in Andhra Pradesh has taken note of the advice given by the Prime Minister to farmers in A.P. to switch over to other crops. .....

(b) The Tobacco Board has fixed pro-duction targets of about half of the last year's target for the year 1993-94 to match the demand and also decided not to permit Virginia tobacco cultivation in Northern black soils and Central black soil regions of A.P. for the year 1993-94.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Tobacco Board has been advising the farmers of Northern and Central black soil areas to stop Virginia tobacco cultivation in 1993-94 and switch over to alternate crops like sunflower, soyabean, pulses vegetables etc.

The Board has also requested the Govt, of A.P. to provide assistance like seed, pesticides etc. in their crop production schemes by giving preference to Virginia tobacco growers to switch over to alternate crdp.